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THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2015

Moving on

Sale agreement for the controversial
Nyon energy park OK'd
Page 3

Ancient bone

Workers digging up soil discovered old
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Page 27

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Please see
Page 2 for
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UPFRONT

■ BIZ BUZZ



Deli on Main owner Kathy Fedson puts together a custom basket of meats, cheeses and preserves.

MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Deli-cious addition to Port Colborne

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Kathy and Chris Fedson went searching for a little slice of heaven they could call their own. Little did they know the dream came in the form of salami, Havarti and a quaint century-old home they transformed into a retirement plan in the heart of Port Colborne.

After raising two children and welcoming two grandchildren into the world, the

longtime Barrie residents decided it was time for a new adventure in life.

They wanted to start a business.

"We've always wanted to do something together," Chris said, admitting neither he nor his wife knew a delicatessen would be in their future.

But while searching for business opportunities, the pair fell in love with a building on Port Colborne's Main St. W. at the corner of Weir Rd., and decided a new deli is just what the lakeside city

needed.

After extensive renovations to add a commercial kitchen and bring the building — once home to The Enchanted Garden — up to code, Deli on Main quietly opened its doors in November.

Time since has been spent evolving the business, tweaking the menu and readying for a grand opening celebration that took place last week.

Opening a business that revolved around food seemed a natural fit, Kathy

said, while breaking from making a batch of the couple's popular perogies.

"We love to cook and we love to eat," she said with a laugh.

"And Chris grew up in the delis of Toronto, so it was perfect."

While specializing in quality meats and cheeses, as most delis do, Deli on Main also offers a variety of preserves, smoothies, perogies and cabbage rolls, all made on site, as well as custom-made gift baskets.

With their respective Polish and Ukrainian backgrounds, Kathy and Chris grew up around the many homemade dishes served at the deli and felt it necessary to include them on both the in-house and catering menus.

Also available are traditional jams and jellies, as well as those made with stevia, a sugar substitute, to provide an alternative for the deli's customers with special dietary requirements.

"People have been so wel-

coming in Port Colborne," Kathy said, adding the deli will continue to flavour its inventory based on the community's wants and needs.

The lakeside city has left the couple thankful they made their move.

"It's an amazing little place," Kathy said.

"We're really looking forward to seeing the summer traffic."

The Biz Buzz column appears every Thursday. If you have a business tip, send it to maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca or call 905-684-7251 ext. 1144.

LOCAL NEWS

■ **ENERGY PARK:** Company to take possession of former city land on April 30

Nyon land sale approved in Port Colborne

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

After a decade of discussions, the land sale agreement for the controversial Nyon energy park has been approved.

At a special meeting of Port Colborne council Monday night, the sale of the property was given the green light following a recommendation from city staff and legal counsel.

Negotiations regarding the project have been ongoing between the city and Nyon Marine Fuelling Corp. since it was last brought forward to council in September.

At the fall meeting, council directed staff to continue talks with Nyon to address issues that prevented the sale from being approved, including what Port Colborne legal counsel felt was a lack of protection to ensure the city receives a return on its initial \$1.5-million investment for sale of the 775 acres of land.

The proposed park is to include a 56-tank petrochemical storage facility for diesel, petrol and oil, as well as a solar farm. The remainder of the property is designated for dry industrial use, to be developed at a later date.

The tank farm will be fed by ships travelling along the Welland Canal with distribution taking place by truck and rail. No manufacturing will take place on site.

The project's fuel agreement will see Nyon providing the city an annual payment of \$500,000 for 10 years through the company's revenue streams.

The company is also set to make monthly payments to Port Colborne of 1/100th of one cent per litre of all petroleum products sold, supplied, distributed or shipped from the property, to a maximum \$4 million per year.

Both legal counsel and city staff recommended approval of the sales agreement after both an indemnity and mortgage were put in place as security to ensure the city receives its funds, said Cecil Vincent, Port Colborne's manager of special projects and strategic



AD STOCK - FOTOLIA

corporate initiatives.

Also included is a clause that requires Nyon to pay the city \$2 million if construction does not begin on the property within three years.

Following Monday's approval, staff are working to finalize the sales agreement and Nyon is set to take possession of the property April

30, Vincent said.

There are still a number of studies that need to be completed, he said, as well as approvals sought by the company from the provincial and federal government before the project can move forward.

As those approvals are granted and studies con-

ducted, they will be brought forward to city staff for review.

Before work can be done on the property itself, a new road access, replacing the existing Kleinsmith Rd. access, will need to be built off Hwy. 140 at Nyon's expense, Vincent said.

"First they need to build the

road, and then they can start on the tank farm. They've got a lot of work ahead of them."

A detailed timeline for the project has yet to be determined.

"We're hoping to see it move rather quickly," Vincent said, as it means economic development for the community.

"We want to encourage the developer to move ahead, but while fulfilling the necessary requirements."

The energy park is expected to create 120 direct full-time jobs in Port Colborne and about 180 indirect jobs.

maryanne.firth@postmedia.ca
Twitter: @mfrthfrbne

■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

In praise of songs of praise

REV. THOMAS P. ARTH
Special to Postmedia Network

The word hymn comes from the Greek word *hymnos*, which means "a song of praise." In our church we sing hymns. For some people that churchy kind of music just isn't their thing. I'm not one that listens to a lot of religious music outside of church. I'll sit at the piano and play some, but when I'm listening to the radio it's either Classic Rock, Country, or Classic Hits. And when my kids get control of the dial sometimes it's the current pop hits, some of which I like too. But I love to sing hymns.

I love music in general. Not all music but most. I play piano and guitar, a bit, but I love to sing. I've sung in school choirs, church choirs, and I sing in a community chamber choir that draws members from all over

Niagara. And on Sunday mornings I sing hymns.

St. Augustine, who lived in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, is to have said, "Qui cantat, bis orat" which means, roughly, "to sing is to pray twice." Singing in worship is one way to gather our thoughts. When we sing we listen to our neighbour, to the organ or other instruments, to our own voice, and as we tune in to each other our different and varied voices flow together in unity.

Congregational singing is part of the Reformation heritage of the church. We all participate. It's not a performance to an audience. All give and receive as they share their voices and hear the singing of others. And together we serve a common purpose: as we sing we praise the Lord. Composer Keith Getty says that singing together reminds us that we're not slaves to the

ruddered individualism promoted by society, that we're responsible for each other, that we help each other, even raising our voices to God together.

This coming Sunday, the Fifth Sunday of Easter, has traditionally been called Cantate Sunday. Cantate is the Latin word for sing. It comes from Psalm 96 which begins, "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth." So this Sunday we're going to sing. We always sing but this week we'll sing more than usual.

What's your favourite hymn? In preparation for this service, a couple of weeks ago I asked those present in our congregation to give me a list of their favourite hymns. I compiled them into quite a long list and we'll sing some of them this week and I'll keep the rest in mind for the future. From my informal survey these are the favourites

among those who were present and handed in a list: "How Great Thou Art," "Amazing Grace," "Beautiful Saviour," "Faith of Our Fathers," "Lift High the Cross," and "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory."

The words of our hymns are not just pretty poetry. They can become an expression of our faith in God. When my grandmother was in the last weeks of her life, sometimes she didn't recognize her own daughter, my mother, and she was beyond having any real conversation. But one day my mother started singing a favourite hymn to her. My grandmother joined in, singing along, word for word. My mother only knew the first two verses from memory but my grandmother sang the third verse by herself. The hymns we sing and get to know become a part of us, they become a testimony that goes with us through life.



French freighter Rocroi Montreal July 1965.

HARRY STOTT PHOTO

Shipwrecks
— Rocroi

SPIC COLLHAM

Special to Postmedia Network

The French freighter Rocroi was built in 1958 and made a single trip into the Sea-way the following year. It arrived at Halifax on March 25, 1966, when the 'tween deck' area, loaded with steel, collapsed crushing the collection of new tractors and vehicles that had been underneath. The cargo had been loaded in Germany and France for Canadian delivery when things went wrong.

The massive damage was cleaned up and the ship was repaired. It resumed sailing later in the year as Louis Delmas and retained French registry until 1976.

The vessel had three more names until it was badly damaged again on Aug. 15, 1984. This time the ship was about 18 miles off Mohka, Yemen, and enroute to Berbera, Somalia, when it hit a mine.

Now sailing as Theopolis, the ship managed to stay afloat and proceeded to India and was laid up. Its fate did not take long to determine and, following a sale to area shipbreakers, the former lakes trader arrived at Alang, India, on Sept. 30, 1984, and scrapping was soon underway.

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For further information, contact Greg Funniger.

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LOCAL NEWS



Sex assault charges

A St. Catharines man has

been arrested on sexual assault charges after police launched an investigation earlier this month. Niagara Regional Police

said an allegation was made stemming from two incidents that happened in St. Catharines between March 30 and April 9.

Gurpreet Singh Toor, 35, of St. Catharines was charged with two counts of sexual assault, sexual interference and sexual

exploitation. Police said the offences are alleged to have happened while a man was in a position of authority.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Police board hits the brakes on fast-tracking body cameras

TIME FOR A RAISE

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia network
A decision to fast-forward

a pilot project to mount body cameras on Niagara Regional Police officers was put on hold

Thursday. The police services board voted to shuffle the issue to its

technology committee for consideration, rather than forge ahead.

"You just have to turn on the television any day to see the benefits body cams are provide in terms of improving public safety and police safety," said regional Coun. Andy Petrowski, a proponent of the cameras.

"I think the business case speaks for itself and, I'm not, but I don't put a price tag on public safety."

Regional Coun. David Barrick wanted the chief to bring forward a "project initiation report." A total of \$250,000 was set aside in the last police budget for a study.

Chief Jeff McGuire recommended the board wait for the results of a study already underway with the Toronto Police Service, the Attorney General and the OPP.

"It is not saying yes to body cams today," Barrick said. "It is saying project initiation. It is already funded. We have a large scope as to what a pilot could look like. I would like to see a pilot here with us as well."

Board chair Bob Gale sided with the chief.

"Toronto is already spending the money," he said. "Why waste our money? Let them waste their money."

The board heard a presentation from IndigoVision, a Toronto-based company that supplies body cameras, and Clockwork Systems, a Niagara-based security company.

Glen Haley of IndigoVision told the board the cameras provide audio and video footage of events. Pilot projects in the United States have shown body cameras change behaviour during interactions with police, provide additional evidence and are valuable training tools.

He said a study in Rialto, Calif. showed the cameras reduced com-

plaints against police by 87%. They also resulted in a 59% reduction in the use of force.

"From a secure data perspective, the units are encrypted," he said. "That video recorded from the device can only be accessed when it is plugged into a computer with the proper software or a USB docking station."

"If the camera is lost on shift, no one can get the video... The officers themselves won't be able to get into it. It takes away some of the concerns about the video ending up on social media."

Board member Ken Gansel said he didn't want the board to rush into a pilot project, even with the money already set aside.

"We are going to eventually make a decision, and I think the right one will be to deploy body cameras," he said. "I really feel having the research data from Toronto... is vital."

McGuire said the NRP executive was already looking into body cameras.

"There are procedural issues that have to be developed," he said. "When is the camera on? When is the camera off? There are issues the privacy commissioner has recently addressed. It is not simply a matter of hanging a camera on an officer. There is also the data storage piece, which is financially terrifying to many police services."

"How long do we store data for? What do we do about retention when it has to go to court? All of those things involve extra full-time employees. I know the OPP is to implement their system, is looking at millions upon millions of dollars for data storage."

Bill Sawchuk is a reporter for Postmedia Network. He can be reached at Bill.Sawchuk@postmedia.ca.

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Bill Sawchuk is a reporter for Postmedia Network. He can be reached at Bill.Sawchuk@postmedia.ca.

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INPORT NEWS

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **NIAGARA HEALTH SYSTEM:** Tammy Powell achieves standing with de Souza Institute

Nurse honoured for her cancer work

DAVID CHERNISH

Special to Postmedia Network

When Tammy Powell started her journey to become a nurse at St. Martha's School of Nursing

in Antigonish, N.S., she had never thought she would win an excellence award.

Powell, from Grimsby, is a registered nurse at Niagara Health

System's Walker Family Cancer Centre and is the first Niagara nurse to achieve one of the highest designation levels by de Souza Institute.

"The de Souza nurses are symbolic of oncology nursing excellence and the de Souza Institute is proud to recognize Tammy as the first oncology nurse in Niagara to receive one of these unique designations," Dr. Mary Jane Espin, director of the Institute, said in a release.

A leader in cancer-care, the de Souza Institute provides ongoing educational support and career counselling to more than 6,000 oncology nurses across Ontario. In partnership with the University Health Network, Cancer Care Ontario and funded by Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the institute provides ongoing educational support, professional development and career counselling to nurses caring for cancer patients and families. Powell was in the military in Nova Scotia before she got accepted to St. Martha's.

"I was only in for three years, but it was a good thing to do," Powell said.

She graduated from nursing in 1989 and has been a nurse ever since.

Powell plays an important role in achieving the Walker centre's main priority — safe and quality care.

"I'm not in it for the glory I'm just in it to help people. This is nice, of course, it has been very rewarding and being acknowledged is nice. I've been a nurse for over 25 years and for my own self accomplishment it means the world to me."

Powell received de Souza Nurse Associate level designation, an ideal designation for nurses who care for patients living with or at risk of developing cancer.

"I can't take all the credit for the designation. Without the team here none of

us would get anything done so we work together and we are our own family."

Powell is passionate about nursing.

"As a nurse, we get to experience many different areas. I started in emergency care and you find out what you enjoy doing. I enjoy helping cancer patients and I love coming into work every day."

Powell says being an oncology nurse is worthwhile, knowing she's up to date as much as she can be for her patients.

Powell first enrolled in a de Souza course in 2010, and through dedication, commitment and time management, she completed her last course in 2014.

She plans to continue her education and work towards achieving the next level, which is a full de Souza Nurse Designation.

"From our side of the coin, we don't look at cancer as a disease. Yes, the patients have cancer, but cancer doesn't rule your life. Nowadays it doesn't."

Powell added so many people are now moving on from cancer she will do anything to help them along their journey.

"Niagara patients are receiving high-quality cancer care by nurses who are dedicated and committed to our patients," said Derek McNally, Niagara Health System executive vice-president of clinical services and chief nursing executive.

Powell plans to continue to care for her cancer patients.

"It means a lot to me, this clinic has been around for 30 years. The cancer centre is new but the chemo clinic has been around for years. To know people can get that care here in Niagara means the world to me."

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LOCAL NEWS

IN BRIEF

Arrest made

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A 38-year-old man was arrested after a Wainfleet break-in caused substantial damage earlier this month. Niagara Regional Police say a large number of items were

stolen from the home and about \$40,000 in property damage was done, when the break-in occurred April 18.

The ensuing police investigation led to the arrest of a Welland man and recovery of about \$15,000 in property

police allege was stolen from the residence.

Charged with break, enter, and commit, and mischief over \$5,000 is Daniel Dicalto, 38, of Welland.

The investigation is continuing.

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■ RIVER RESCUE: Fisherman hits head falling into water

Injured man saved from gorge

TONY RICCIUTO

Postmedia Network

A fisherman was rescued from the Niagara River Gorge after he slipped into the water and was injured on Wednesday.

Niagara Helicopters and members of the Niagara Parks Police High Angle River Team were called to help with the rescue shortly after noon near the Whirlpool in Niagara Falls.

As a precaution, an ORANGE air ambulance landed near the Niagara Glen, but was not required to take a patient for treatment.

NPPF Paul Forcier said two men, who are not from Niagara, were fishing when they became stranded on a rock. One man slipped and injured himself when his head struck a rock. The men were unable to get back to shore safely on their own.

Jack Cashman, a visitor from Vermont who was in the Glen with his family, witnessed the incident.

"He was fishing off a flat rock with a friend, standing near the edge, and a swell of water came over the top of the rock and it looked like he slipped into the water. He fell and hit his head," said Cashman.

"His buddy grabbed him and was able to drag him out, but we could see him convulsing."

Cashman and his son-in-law called down to the men and asked if they needed medical help.

The one man said his friend was unconscious from hitting his head and that might have caused him to go into a

seizure.

The son-in-law attempted to make his way down to assist the two men, but there was too much water around the rock. He was not able to reach them.

Cashman called his daughter on her cellphone because she had already gone ahead and was nearing the top of the Glen. He explained the situation and she called 911.

When rescue personnel arrived, Cashman went with them into the gorge to where the men were located.

"A helicopter was brought in and they were able to lift both men off the rock," said Cashman.

Police said the two men were lifted to street level where the injured man was examined by paramedics and found to have minor injuries. He was released at the scene.

Forcier said the two men were fishing during the morning when they were surprised by the rising water levels that occurs at that time. That left them stranded on the rock.

"If you stick to the marked trails you won't run into any difficulties," said Forcier. "Clearly, these gentlemen were off the marked trail. I know their intention was fishing, but they put themselves in a precarious situation that became more precarious."

Fishermen are being advised to stay off the rocks when fishing in the Whirlpool area.

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■ MARINE INDUSTRY

Algoma makes \$160M in additions to its fleet

DON FRASER
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purchase, and two contracts for vessels, in deals worth \$160 million.

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Since 2009, Algoma's purchase of three coastal class vessels and investments in state-of-the-art Equinox Class ships has meant more than 5560 million in investment to its domestic dry-bulk fleet renewal.

The latest purchase is for a self-unloading vessel from Gypsum Transportation Ltd. that will be renamed the Algoma Integrity.

Algoma also signed contracts with a subsidiary of Uljanik of Croatia, for two new Equinox Class, self-unloading, dry-bulk lake freighters.

"The Integrity was really an opportunity to buy a vessel that will ultimately be part of our ocean fleet," said Peter Winkley, Algoma's vice-president of finance.

"It will first serve a couple of years domestically (in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence) to meet with some extra demand we've got now.

"Then, it becomes part of our ocean fleet."

The Equinox ships — replacing two in Algoma's existing fleet — will focus on salt and aggregates shipments.

They are almost 200-metres long and 24-metres wide and include a design that's noted for its efficiency and environmentally-clean operation.

Exhaust-gas scrubbers in the ships, certified for use on Equinox Class ships, remove at least 97% of sulphur-oxide emissions from the exhaust stream.

Algoma cites them as the most environmentally advanced and efficient vessels operating on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.

"That 650-Class is an important business for us ... and we have a chance to reinvest in fleet renewal there," Winkley said.

Winkley said the Equinox ships are similar to recent orders of that class, except these two are slightly smaller.

One reason for the new private investment is the Canadian government's removal of a 25% foreign vessel import duty in 2009.

"It was the impetus ... to be in this (renewal) program," he said, adding there are no shipyards in Canada that can build these types of vessels.

"The shipyard work that can be done in Canada tends to be focused on military," Winkley said. "And of course, we also have some repair work and dry-docking that's done (in Canadian docks)."

The announcement comes after a January study revealed more than \$7 billion is being spent on renewing assets and infrastructure improvements in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway shipping system.

Complied by maritime trade consultants Martin Associates, it reports \$7.1 billion in capital spending on ships, ports and terminals and waterway infrastructure in that system in Canada and the U.S.

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■ NIAGARA COLLEGE: The Baskerville Band is school's best title of the year Video game design students make the grade

JULIE KADZVITI

Special to Postmedia Network

Marching in a group of four, while completing fun challenges on three musical levels — that is the simple but award-winning premise of *The Baskerville Band* video game created by seven students in Niagara College's game development program.

The thrilling game won the award for best overall game at the college's second annual game development launch recently.

The fun event is a showcase for second- and third-year students in the program, who get to display the games they spent the better part of a year designing.

More than 200 guests attended the event and got the opportunity to play the games on display while mingling and enjoying some light snacks.

The winning team consisted of Rob Colonico, Alyssa Felstead, Allison Gains, Sean Fackrell, Julie Benoit, Cody Tomosup and Dalton Ingham. The members said they were "ecstatic" to win the coveted award.

Rick Goertz, the college's game development co-ordinator, commended the students on their hard work.

"I think it's a great night for the students, it's a celebration of all the work that they do, all their ideas. It's a really difficult thing to make a video game and they've managed to put this together in a couple of weeks of production. I think they are all great games," he said.

Goertz said *The Baskerville Band* was selected as best overall game because it was "unique and dynamic."

Another significant award, the Associate Dean's Award of Excellence, given to the student who is an all-round champion for the program, went to Joseph Boucher.

"I definitely wasn't expecting it. I kinda felt sick with excitement. I was thinking for the first couple of minutes but now I am extremely happy. It means that all the hard work I've put into this course has paid off," Boucher said.

Erica Evans and David Evans of Phantom Compass, a game development company based in St. Catharines, came to see what the students had to offer and were not disappointed.

"I sat in on a panel that reviewed the original concepts, all six games turned out a lot better than I could have imagined. I was impressed with the amount of polish they had in the games, considering the amount of time they had," David Evans said.

Erica Evans agreed. "They are very high quality games. The students are an exceptional bunch; they seem very job-ready, industry ready."

The games developed have improved year over year, said Goertz, a testament to the hard work the students put in.

"When you walk in this, you just see pizza boxes stacked up next to the garbage can, you know they were there all night," he quipped.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ **HISTORY:** Welland property also secured in connection with St. Catharines discovery

Ancient bones found at worksite

KAREN WALTER
Postmedia Network

An archaeologist is assessing a downtown St. Catharines construction site this week after workers digging up soil discovered old human remains.

The bones, of unknown origin and ethnicity, have been cordoned off on the site at 130 James St. across from the courthouse.

A second site on River St. in Welland, where truckloads of soil from the St. Catharines site have been deposited, has also been secured.

"We don't know how ancient they are," said John Kingston, treasurer of Penna Terra, which is building a 210-bed student residence on the former municipal parking lot.

He said on Thursday, workers were digging when bones from the adjoining property fell onto the Penna Terra site. They shut down the site and police were contacted.

Niagara Regional Police Const. Phil Gavin said police

initially secured the site as a possible crime scene. An investigation with the coroner's office, however, determined the bones were archeological in nature, not criminal.

Regional coroner Dr. Jack Stanborough said the remains consisted of ancient bones. Their age hasn't been determined, but he said they were likely more than 200 years old. He suspected they were probably from a First Nation community, which would not be out of keeping with other First Nation burials discovered.

Stanborough said finding archeological human remains isn't all that unusual in Niagara.

"It's not uncommon. Certainly in Niagara we get them every couple of months," he said, explaining it usually happens when a new site is excavated. "It's a combination of First Nations ancestry with modern development."

Police released the scene and turned it over to the

property owner and Ontario's Registrar of Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, Michael D'Mello, said by e-mail Monday there is no determination yet of the cultural affinity of the remains and it's still not known if they are of aboriginal ancestry.

"The origin of the site is unknown as well, since there is no evidence of intentional burials or an ossuary or a pit burial," he wrote.

The Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation — the closest First Nation community to the property — were notified of the discovery on Thursday by the Registrar.

A representative visited Friday, but on Monday D'Mello said there is no evidence to



JULIE JOCSAK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Human remains were found under the blue tarp at the excavation of a parking lot on the corner of James St. and Raymond St. in St. Catharines.

indicate the remains are of aboriginal ancestry.

He said the landowner has arranged for an investigation to be carried out by a profes-

sionally licenced archeologist, as required under the Funeral Burial and Cremation Services Act.

Once that archeologist

makes a report, the registrar will make a declaration about the origin of the site and the process of removing the remains will begin.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ **COMPETITION:** These talented people won't be stumped when it comes time to create

Chainsaw artists create a buzz in Welland

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Artists from across the province are revving their engines for the second annual Chain-

saw Carving Event that returns to Welland this week. So far, 10 carvers have signed

up to participate, which has added a competitive aspect this year with people's choice prizes being awarded.

It runs along Prince Charles Dr. at West Main St., on the property of West Side Propane from Thursday to Sunday.

Each carver will start with a bare, raw log and will have four days to create something out of it to be judged for the competition. On the last day, at 2 p.m., the pieces will be auctioned.

Last year's pieces sold for between a couple of hundred and a couple of thousand dollars.

Chainsaw carver and competition organizer Jean Pierre Gauthier said it brought in a lot of people last year — way more than what organizers had anticipated, and that people were liking what they saw.

"From eight months to 80 years old, everybody's always got the same expression — 'Wow!' said Gauthier.

Stumps are already starting to accumulate along Prince Charles Dr. as everyone prepares for this week's compe-

tition.

Gauthier, a full-time carver, said the competition is a great free show for people in Welland to stop by and see.

Gauthier was approached by West Side Propane owner John Parisee of about starting chainsaw carving competition last year.

"In this end of the province there's nothing around like it," said Parisee.

He said that they're looking to move to a different venue for future events, as they're aiming to have it grow too large to fit at his site. Parisee said that they are trying to attract chainsaw carvers from across Canada and the United States.

Carvers can still register to take part in the competition, and wood is always needed.

For more information and to register, call Jean Pierre Gauthier at 905-892-0436.

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Jean Pierre Gauthier carves a piece he's working on in advance of the Chainsaw Carving Event which ran from Thursday through Sunday in Welland.

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■ EDUCATION

Schools measure up, mostly

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Results from a think-tank's report card show some improvement in Niagara's high schools.

The percentage of schools that have shown statistically significant improvement over the past five years — four out of 27 — is quite good, said Peter Cowley, director of school performance studies at the Fraser Institute.

"And the number of schools showing statistically significant decline — only one — is encouraging," added Cowley, who is also the report's co-author.

The Fraser Institute's annual analysis of Ontario's secondary schools — known as its report card — ranks 749 of them using data from provincial standardized literacy and math tests.

Released Sunday, it uses academic indicators based on a school's average in Grade 9 Education Quality and Accountability Office math tests and the percentage of students who pass a Grade 10 literacy test.

The institute also looks at other data that, including the gap in results between girls and boys.

Not all schools met Fraser's EQAO criteria to be included.

Niagara's schools are about average relative to all the others in the rankings. The average overall rating for the region's 27 high schools in the 2013/2014 ranking is 6.2, compared to an average for all schools in Ontario of 6.0.

With an overall rating of 6.9 as a

group, Cowley said Niagara's Catholic high schools "considerably outperform the schools operated by the public board in each of the last five years."

The highest ranked in Niagara was Sir Winston Churchill in St. Catharines, which placed 119th out of 749 schools in Ontario, resulting in a score of 7.6 out of 10.

Blessed Trinity in Grimsby was No. 2, for an overall rating last year of 7.5. Eden and E.L. Crossley were tied at third with scores of 7.4.

The lowest ranked in Niagara is St. Catharines Collegiate at 701st place, with a rating of 3.0 — but that also represents an improvement over an overall rating of 2.4 over the past five years.

Over the five most recent years, the fastest-improving schools are Fort Erie, then Beamsville and Saint Michael in Niagara Falls.

The fastest declining over that time was Saint Paul in Niagara Falls, said the report card.

Highest ranked in the province was a francophone Catholic trades-based school Minto in Ottawa, which scored a perfect 10.

The DSIB was, as usual, highly critical of the Fraser rankings.

Education superintendent Helen McGregor said the board "fundamentally disagrees with the Fraser report and the ranking of schools."

"The Fraser report misuses EQAO data and does nothing to promote understanding of the work that occurs in schools," she said.

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■ **EDUCATION:** Durham union first to walk, six more boards targeted

Niagara teachers not close to striking

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

The union representing high school teachers at the District School Board of Niagara says strike action is not imminent.

For a bargaining unit to strike, there first has to be a no-board report process involving both sides and the provincial labour board, says Daniel Peat, president of Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation District 12 in Niagara.

And prior to that, there first has to be an application for conciliation.

"We haven't applied for conciliation, so at the moment we're not in that (strike) queue," Peat said.

This, as Durham teachers in the Oshawa area were the first to walk off the job Monday. The OSSTF has threatened to strike at six other Ontario school boards if collective agreements cannot be negotiated.

Niagara is not among them. Both sides are blaming the other for the Durham strike — the union says the issues include class sizes and school time allotted for interactions with students.

On Monday, central negotiations between the OSSTF and the government resumed after breaking off over the weekend.

Negotiations happen both provincially and locally, with local issues hashed out with various

regional bargaining units.

"We have been negotiating on things that are clear to both sides as being at the local table and are local issues," Peat said, adding he couldn't disclose those issues.

He said the teachers' local and DSBN met Friday and are scheduled to meet again for negotiations on May 8. As for how negotiations are going, "I'd prefer not to comment publicly on that," Peat said.

The Niagara OSSTF district has 876 members on its seniority list, representing about 847 full-time equivalent positions. In addition, there are 279 on the occasional teacher bargaining unit list.

"We're progressing, and working towards a fair settlement for all the parties involved," said Jim Morgan, DSBN's superintendent of human resources. "And we're focused on students and student achievement."

Teachers unions in Ontario say they are angry over contracts and wage freezes imposed on them three years ago by the

province.

Talks with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and province are also reportedly at an impasse.

James Ryan, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, said his union is in the process of conducting a strike vote this week.

He said OECTA would then go back to the bargaining table with the province at the end of this month.

"There is" potential, perhaps even a likelihood of an impasse," he said.

At that point, they would go through the conciliation and possible no-board report request that would start the clock for a potential strike.

"The earliest we would be in a strike position would be sometime in June," Ryan said.

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■ NIAGARA REGION NOTEBOOK

Welland bridge set to get LED lights

Let there be lights, LED lights!

Niagara Region's public works committee endorsed a plan Tuesday that will see the recently refurbished Main Street Bridge in Welland fitted with LED lights.

The cost of that project, which will be shared between the Region and City of Welland, is estimated at slightly more than \$506,000.

The city included its share of the cost in budget deliberations Monday night (the budget will be voted on next week), but Mayor Frank Camplion warned the Region Tuesday in committee that the project had better come in at the estimated price.

"We need to make sure it doesn't go over budget," Camplion said, "because we don't have any more money to contribute to it."

Camplion noted that when the issue of cost-sharing the lighting project was brought to Welland council in November, he voted against it because there was no firm price tag.

Of the three bidders on the project, Procon Constructors Inc. came in with the lowest bid.

Its bid of \$414,000 bested that of E.S. Rex Ltd. (\$487,060) and Weismann Electric Ltd. (\$505,450).

The low bid, along with detailed design, contract administration and inspection and taxes, brings the estimated project cost to \$506,152.

St. Catharines regional Coun. Andy

Petrovski had an issue with the call for bids that ended up excluding an unidentified company from the process because it did not attend a required site visit.

Ron Tripp, the Region's commissioner of public works, explained to Petrovski initial advertising calling for bids failed to mention a mandatory site visit was required by all bidders, "but the contract documents themselves clearly indicated" bidders were required to attend a meeting at the bridge prior to submitting bids.

"There was one bidder that I was aware of that picked up the tender package after that meeting took place, and therefore wasn't eligible to bid," Tripp said.

Because it was staff's mistake in failing to note the mandatory site visit in the initial advertising, Tripp said staff "entertained" holding another meeting at the bridge for the benefit of those companies that did not pick up the contract documents until after the mandatory meeting.

They decided not to, though, because doing so was deemed to be unfair to the companies that had followed proper procedure.

St. Catharines regional Coun. Brian Heit took exception to Petrovski taking nearly 15 minutes with his questioning of Tripp.

"After 15 minutes of confusion — was the tender document correct and stated clearly there had to be a site visit?" Heit asked Tripp.



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Man charged in Welland break-in

Efforts by an alert homeowner and the Niagara Regional Police canine unit led to the arrest of a male following a Welland break-in Thursday.

At 5:45 a.m., a homeowner on Norway Ave. discovered two males breaking into his garage.

The males, who stole tools, liquor and other items from the structure, fled on

foot after being discovered.

The homeowner called police and the NRP's canine unit attended.

One suspect was tracked from the garage and arrested a few blocks away.

Stolen property was also located nearby.

All stolen items were recovered, including those from the garage as well as a GPS stolen from an unlocked vehicle on Clarendon Circle in Welland.

Lucas Simpson, 19, of Welland, is charged with break, enter and theft, as well as a second count of theft under \$5,000.

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